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EUGENE J. MCCARTHY
He has complaints

THE LIMITS OF POWER:
Or: America's Role in the World, by Eugene J. McCarthy (Holt, Rinehart & Winston; 238 pages, \$5.95).

Reviewed by
CHARLES W. BAILEY

Sen. Eugene McCarthy has attracted a good deal of public attention in the past few months for his attacks on United States policy in Vietnam. This book — in effect a compilation of his foreign policy views as expressed in the Senate and elsewhere — makes it clear that his criticism is not limited to this one area.

To be blunt about it, Minnesota's senior senator thinks his country is on the wrong track in a lot of places around the world.

HE BEGINS his book by saying: "Our foreign policy should be more restrained and, insofar as

McCarthy View

Scans U.S. Foreign Policy

prudent judgment can determine, more closely in keeping with the movement of history." He ends by asserting that "a nation has prestige according to its merits. America's contribution to world civilization must be more than a continuous performance demonstration that we can police the planet."

McCarthy supports these two generalizations with a wide range of specific complaints. He reviews the record of the Central Intelligence Agency and of the Defense Department's arms-sales operations, and suggests that both agencies have on occasion acted counter to stated national policies.

In these cases, as in his more philosophical passages, McCarthy covers ground that is familiar to those who have listened to his Senate speeches or to his interrogation of witnesses before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But the drawing together of this material in a book gives his thesis added coherence and force.

McCarthy is, first, a relativist in foreign policy.

Let us not do too much, judge too absolutely, exert too much power, seek to decide too many issues. He finds that Dean Acheson was a good secretary of state — his "conception of foreign policy was classical, therefore restrained and limited."

THIS IS not to say that McCarthy excludes moral considerations. Indeed, he is most effective when he discusses the "desirability and the very morality" of U.S. arms-sales programs which sap the limited resources of underdeveloped nations.

And his case against the cloak-and-dagger operations of the CIA rests not only on the fact that they often contravene or ignore established national policy, but also on the potential danger to our own society of a powerful and pervasive secret instrumentality whose agents "move from government business, then to the use of academic organizations and scholars and even students, unmindful of what they are doing or indifferent to the consequences of their actions."

MCCARTHY reviews U.S. policy in various sections of the world — including Micronesia, where he reminds readers that this country has done a mediocre job in meeting its responsibility under a United Nations mandate.

Assessment of the various geographical critiques will vary according to the prejudices of the reader. This reviewer found the Senator's Latin American and European chapters more persuasive than his discussion of Vietnam.

IN A FINAL chapter, McCarthy suggests that last year's Senate hearings began "a new era in United States understanding of China" because they made it respectable — for the first time since the late 1940s — to hear reasoned debate on the subject.

The senator goes on to provide an excellent capsule summary of Chinese history and Chinese attitudes toward the rest of the world.

That the conclusions he draws will be argued by some does not detract from the usefulness of the exposition; the major contribution of this book lies, after all, not in the answers it offers so much as in the questions it raises.

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